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ABSTRACT

This symposium is comprised of four papers on university human resource development (HRD) programs. "Passions for Excellence: HRD Graduate Programs at United States Universities" (K. Peter Kuchinke) presents an analysis of case studies that reveals convergent and divergent themes related to the genesis of programs and subsequent theoretical orientation, their standing within their academic homes, the reach and comprehensiveness of curricula, and issues and concerns faced by faculty, administrators, and students. "Evaluation of a HRD Degree Program" (Dale E. Thompson, Kit Brooks, Elizabeth S. Lazarraga) reports on a study that examined students' and their work supervisor's perceptions of an undergraduate degree program--specifically, how the program benefited them personally and professionally and how their organization gained from their participation. (Students and supervisors felt students became better workers and had more knowledge, focus, confidence, and initiative and indicated these traits aided students in motivating others, forming networks, understanding work relations/systems, and thinking through problems in a more informed manner.) "Assessment of the Graduate HRD Program, St. John Fisher College" (Erin Glanton, Marilynn N. Butler) describes findings that suggest significant differences between groups of learners in Level 2: Learning and Level 5: Ultimate Value using Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation and Hamblin's fifth level. "National Comparison of Graduate Level HRD Programs" (Cheryl Klein, Marilynn N. Butler) provides benchmarking information from a study of 68 programs related to curriculum, admission requirements, and mission statements. All papers include substantial references. (YLB)

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Passions for Excellence: HRD Graduate Programs at US Universities

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Using a multiple case study approach, the author investigated leading university graduate HRD programs focusing on history and institutional characteristics; norms and values of administrators, faculty, and students; and present status and visions for the future. The analysis reveals convergent and divergent themes related to the genesis of programs and subsequent theoretical orientation, their standing within their academic homes, the reach and comprehensiveness of curricula, and issues and concerns faced by faculty, administrators, and students.

Keywords: HRD University Programs, Case Study

Human Resource Development (HRD) university programs form important parts of national systems of HRD by educating future practitioners, providing continuing professional development, and preparing the next generations of researchers and teachers. While HRD and related curricula played relatively minor roles in many university departments in the 1970s and early '80s, their enrollments and stature have increased over the past 15 years to a point where they are now the "bread and butter activity" (Gray, 1997, p. 80), drawing large enrollments of certificate, masters, and doctoral students. HRD programs and courses experience strong demand, also from non-education undergraduate students who are seeking employment skills. While most programs were established in the 1980s, the decade of the 1990s saw an increase by about 15% (Kuchinke, *in press*), and by 1997, some 250 U.S. colleges and universities were offering certificates and degrees in HRD and related fields, such as instructional technology and performance technology (ASTD, 1996). Despite the fact that HRD programs are firmly established in the Academy, both in the US and abroad (Chalofsky & Larson-Daugherty, 1996), there is little systematic research on them.

This present study emerged from a need sensing process conducted with a panel of 21 leading HRD scholars in the US and Great Britain in 1999 that surfaced as one of three most pressing areas requiring investigation questions about institutional characteristics and arrangements of academic programs (Kuchinke, 2001a). A subsequent survey of 83 prominent university programs yielded important insight into institutional and curricular features (Kuchinke, 2001b). The results of the study reported here represent a second stage in this line of inquiry using a multiple case study approach to gain in-depth insight and information on three purposefully selected US HRD graduate programs located in the eastern, southeastern, and midwestern parts of the country. This qualitative study focused on three primary areas: institutional features; genesis, present status, and future plans; and norms and values of administrators, faculty, and students. These areas were selected because they reflected the consensus of the expert panel as needing investigation and had emerged as important areas of investigation from both available literature and the survey of HRD programs. The information gained from this study are deemed to be important for current and future HRD academic program administrators, faculty, and students of the field as well as those interested in the evolution of HRD as a field of research and teaching.

Review of Literature

When conducting a review of literature of HRD programs, the dearth of existing empirical work became evident. The listing of programs published by the American Society for Training and Development annually until 1997 is often cited as the authoritative source for the population of programs (for example, Chalofsky & Larson-Dougherty, 1996), but it is likely to be incomplete (Kuchinke, *in* press). Early work by Pace (1984, 1988) focused on the comparison of HRD curricula. More recently, two large-scale surveys addressed issues of curriculum, program names, and enrollments (Gaudet & Vincent, 1993; Kuchinke, *in press*) but were based on convenience samples and failed to provide qualitative program-level information. Survey work by Peterson and Provo (1996) profiled the HRD and Adult Education professoriate and included responses of some 140 faculty members. In the related field of Adult Education, Milton, Watkins, Spears Studdard, and Burch (2000) used a mixed-method approach to investigate recent changes in adult education graduate programs focusing enrollment and faculty growth.

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Several single-program studies have been presented at national conferences, and these include Willis and Kahnwiler's (1995) account of the genesis and continuance of an HRD program within a general systems framework. The authors chronicle the evolution of a single program over a six-year period and report on curriculum development and implementation, alumni and student survey results, market analyses, and alumni interviews. There are also a small number of studies investigating the adequacy of the academic curriculum when compared to professional roles and competencies (for example, Baylen, Bailey, & Samardzija, 1996; Leach, 1993; Dare & Leach, 1999).

Research Questions and Methodology

The lack for systematic information on academic programs leads to uncertainty among faculty and administrators about the scope and endurance of the field, among students who seek targeted career preparation, and among employers who want clear information about prospective employees. To begin to answer these and related questions, three overarching research questions were pursued in this study.

1) What are the historical development and institutional characteristics and arrangements of HRD programs?
2) What are the norms and values of HRD program administrators, faculty, and students?
3) What are the current challenges of and future plans or visions for HRD programs?

Because the main purpose of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of HRD programs, a case study design was selected which allowed to investigate these programs in their real-life contexts and include relevant contextual factors (Yin, 1994). For the purpose of this study, each of three HRD programs was framed as a case or unit of analysis in a multiple case study approach that allowed for comparison and contrast of major themes. The three programs are large, highly visible, and regarded as prominent in the HRD scholarly community. The three were located in the eastern, southeastern, and midwestern parts of the U.S. and each is classified as a Carnegie Extensive Doctoral/Research University. Three primary data collection methods were used: interviewing, document analysis, and observation. In spring and early summer of 2001, I conducted a total of twenty-two interviews of about one hour each during site visits to the three programs of about two days each. Conversation partners included 18 faculty members—three of whom also had administrative responsibilities in their respective departments, one full-time administrator, and 25 graduate students. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and later analyzed using open coding for thematic analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Questions for faculty and administrators centered on the history and status of the programs, on successes and challenges, and plans for the future. Student interviews addressed student's professional and educational backgrounds and goals, their reasons for applying to the program, and their experiences in the HRD program.

I used printed and on-line documentation on each program to prepare for the site visits and to obtain program information. I used observational techniques during each visit for additional contextual information. I used a two-stage validation process (Van Manen, 1990): During the interview process, I ensured accuracy of understanding through questioning and rephrasing and by summarizing the information at the end of each interview. In a second stage, program descriptions and summaries of the thematic analyses were sent via e-mail to participants at each site with the request for critique and comments, and their reactions are incorporated in this report.

The primary limitations of this study result from its design within a case study framework using largely qualitative data. The three programs, while prominent, present a purposeful sample and are not likely to be representative of the population of HRD academic programs. Thus, the findings may lack external validity and do not generalize. Further, time limitations and scheduling conflicts restricted the number of interview partners. In particular, missing from the analysis are part-time and adjunct faculty, faculty on leave, and part-time students. Third, the design did not incorporate stakeholders beyond the particular program, such as those at the school, college, and campus levels, and alumni or employers. These limitations clearly indicate the need for further research.

Results

To provide contextual information, a brief summary description of each program is given at the beginning of this section, followed by results and findings related to the three overarching research questions: history and institutional characteristics, norms and values, and challenges and visions for the future.

The HRD program in the eastern part of the country (Eastern) is located in a major metropolitan area on a largely residential campus with some 23,000 students, the majority of whom are graduate students. The HRD program is housed in one of three major departments in the Graduate School of Education. It offers masters and doctoral programs in several different formats on the main campus, off-site, and internationally. A certificate option

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of three courses is also available. Overall enrollment is about 100 students, with some 40 enrolled in the doctoral program, and the majority of students are working adults who attend part-time. There is a research center is affiliated with the program focusing on issues of learning that provides a research-to-practice link with corporate and institutional clients. The program was established some 30 years ago and has ten full-time faculty with backgrounds in education, management, psychology, and other social sciences. Eastern's program mission is to "enhance critical thinking skills by examining organizational processes and structures to improve workplace performance" and is structured around three pillars: people, organizations, and learning.

The HRD program in the southeastern part of the country (Southeastern) is located near a major urban center and belongs to one of several schools within the College of Education. The program draws on faculty, resources, and expertise from two departments, Adult Education and Occupational Studies who combined offer a master's (M.Ed.) in Human Resource and Organizational Development and two certificates (off-site, part-time) in training/HRD and instructional design and technology. A doctoral emphasis in HRD is offered as part of the Adult Education or Occupational Studies departments. There is a joint curriculum committee, and currently there is a program head and one faculty member from each of these two departments with primary focus on HRD. There are about 30 HRD masters' students, 15 doctoral students with an HRD emphasis, and 20 students enrolled in the weekend certificate options. The program's emphases are on learning within organizations as well as on career and organization development, group facilitation, globalization, and workplace educational technology. Conceptually, the program is focused on the integration of development, training, and technology for the purpose of promoting learning in organizations. Its vision is to educate graduates to become "reflective practitioners with excellent interpersonal helping skills, strategic business partners with the ability to link [human resource and organization development] to the needs of global, complex human systems".

Located in a university town about 2 hours away from three major urban centers, the program in the midwestern part of the country (Midwestern) forms one of two emphases within the department of Human Resource Education that, in turn, is one of six units in the College of Education. It offers masters and doctoral degrees as well as a graduate level certificate requiring a minimum of eight courses beyond the master's degree. Active graduate enrollment in the HRD emphasis is about 120, and this includes two part-time online master's cohorts. There are two primary programmatic emphases in the HRD program: teaching and learning—focused on instructional design, delivery, evaluation, and technology—and organization and leadership development. Over the past several years, increasing emphasis has also been placed on international HRD. The program's mission is "global leadership in the generation and transmission of knowledge for educational training and development, professional preparation in the development of research, teaching, and leadership capabilities of individuals and organizations, and quality professional services to public and private organizations and agencies interested in life-long learning at local, state, national, and international levels."

History and Institutional Characteristics

When looking at the genesis and histories of the three HRD programs, three alternative patterns of evolution can be discerned that appear to affect the program signatures and standing within the school/college environment. In the case of Eastern, the program was established as human resource development by one of the field's founders as early as 1970, focusing on program planning and design. In the mid-1980s the program expanded as new faculty members joined, adding organization and career development expertise, new program format options, and the international doctoral cohort and executive leadership programs. Thus its identity as and focus on HRD was never questioned. As one faculty member put it, "we are who we are and we were never something else". This undivided focus and continuity of direction on HRD appears to provide the program at Eastern a degree of legitimacy and freedom in staffing and curricular matters not found in the other two programs. As a matter of policy, for example, new faculty are recruited from the core social sciences, such as psychology, or from schools of management with expertise in organizational behavior, rather than from other HRD programs or schools of education. The breadth of faculty expertise in the social sciences is organized around the three pillars of organizational development and change; leadership development; and individual, group, and organizational learning. Eastern's HRD curriculum includes—in addition to HRD and adult learning content— foundational courses and course content in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and management science, as well as applied organization science topics. As a result of this broad focus, Eastern attracts students with a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds and goals. Eastern's program brochure states the intended career paths for its graduate as follows: "Because of the enhanced knowledge and skills, many students find that the degree program serves as a springboard to attain professional goals—entry into management consulting positions and challenging HR jobs, or promotions into higher levels of HR and management responsibility."

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When Eastern's program reflects a broad multidisciplinary approach, the institutional history and resulting program structure at Midwestern followed a different pattern. The HRD program evolved within a unit that until about ten years ago focused on the preparation of vocational teachers in a variety of subjects, including technical, business, agriculture, and home economics. Business and industry training played a relatively minor role in the department until recently when the vocational teacher preparation programs were closed or moved to other units on campus and the department changed its name to Human Resource Education. The HRD curriculum at Midwestern reflects its institutional tradition with a strong focus on instructional design and development, program evaluation, and instructional technology, although in recent years expertise in organization development and international HRD has been added through new hires. Still, the program is focused on the educational aspects of HRD. Faculty reported a degree of ambiguity towards HRD as a field and its role within a college of education. One faculty member reported: "Colleagues in the college and even in our department are skeptical over the role of an organization science based approach to HRD." While enrollments in the HRD are strong with two introductory courses regularly attracting well over 200 students from across the campus, faculty reported difficulties in developing HRD curriculum that reflects the broad interdisciplinary nature of the field. Applications for new courses, which require approval at college and campus levels, need to be clearly reflective of education-related content and cannot include openly any organization-science materials to be approved.

Despite these difficulties, however, the program appears to be thriving; once the bureaucratic hurdles of course approvals and reviews are passed, academic freedom ensures that teaching and research reflects current HRD theory and practice. The traditional orientation towards vocational education leads this program to explore linkages and integration between HRD and career and technical education. In non-traditional program offerings, such as the online program and the international course offerings in Africa and Eastern Europe, the focus on HRD within the context of the organizational sciences seems less problematic.

While the program at Eastern was focused from its start on HRD and the one at Midwestern emerged from a traditional vocational teacher preparation program, the program at Southeastern was created as a collaborative effort between two departments—Adult Education and Occupations Studies--both of which maintain their traditional foci but also contribute faculty and share in the governance to the HRD program. Historically, there had existed in both departments some course work, teaching, and research focused on HRD—with emphasis on organizational learning in Adult Education and on training and development in Occupational Studies. Initial plans for a cross-campus program in HRD in the early led to the plan for a cross-departmental program and the creation of one faculty position in each of the two departments focused specifically on HRD under the leadership of a program director. A curriculum committee with members of both departments is involved in course and program planning, and this joint governance is viewed as a source of strength in ensuring theoretical and intellectual breadth and richness. Despite philosophical differences of Adult Education faculty who focus on a broad range of issues, populations, and theoretical perspectives and faculty in Occupational Studies with a primary focus on public schooling and teacher education, the joint governance, in the words of one adult education faculty member "keeps the program honest."

The creation of the cross-departmental master's HRD program has resulted in an expanded and revised core curriculum of HRD courses including organization development, strategic HRD, and globalization and diversity. Student further select from additional coursework in technology and action learning. There is some course taking in other schools within the College of Education, especially in instructional technology and counseling, and students, on occasion, take classes in other units on campus such as industrial psychology, political science, and social work. As in the case of Midwestern, faculty at Southeastern commented on the need to "hide the term organizational from course titles and course descriptions and instead emphasize the link to education." Whereas the master's and certificate programs are offered through the HRD program, doctoral level students formally enroll in either the Adult Education or the Occupational Studies departments and develop a program of study with a focus on HRD in their home units.

The three programs, thus, have evolved in different ways —focused on HRD from the start, from the closing of a traditional teacher-training program, and a collaboration between two independent departments. These different histories appear to contribute to different institutional signatures with respect to staffing, curriculum, and the degree of acceptance of HRD. All three programs, while successful and expanding, indicated that HRD, as a subject matter and academic program, appeared to be a contested domain that needed to be justified and defended. While all three program contributed strongly to the instructional mission of their respective home institutions, there was a sense that its acceptance was, to a larger degree than for other programs, conditional on continued strong enrollment and generation of instructional units. A senior administrator shared the following observation: " Enrollments are needed but what really matters are the number of full-time faculty in HRD. Also, deans and administrator tend to look to other universities. The closure on one HRD program can have strong negative effects on the entire community".

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Norms and Values of HRD Faculty, Administrators, and Students

The theme of marginality of HRD programs also extended to their relationships with other units in the college and on campus. To some degree, members of all three departments observed a lack of integration and collaboration with and a lack of recognition of other campus units. Within Education, HRD faculty commented on ideological disagreements, real and perceived. "HRD is seen as pro-capital and exploitative, I think other [Education] colleagues feel that we are selling out to big business," commented one faculty member. Another observed: "Colleagues in other departments often see the role of education as levying criticism on the existing political and social system, in particular those with a postmodern orientation. The fact that HRD is often defined as advancing organizations is often misunderstood to mean that we are corporatist." Relationships with related units on campus are also difficult, except for occasional bonds with faculty units built on personal relationships. As one administrator said: "Colleagues in business and labor relations often are surprised to learn that we focus on learning in business organizations. By and large, Education is associated with teacher training for public schools."

In this difficult institutional climate, HRD administrators and faculty at all three universities commented on the high level of entrepreneurial spirit that had led to the inception of the program and maintained it. In all three cases, the programs was built with much energy by one or two founding faculty who developed the curriculum, marketed the program, built relationships with the local business community, recruited students, and, overall, provided guidance and direction. As one faculty member observed: "We are very much operating in an entrepreneurial mode here, building the program, promoting it, working with extramural. Nothing is taken for granted." This level of commitment among HRD faculty and administrators is based on an intense desire to build up the programs and advance the field of HRD. Where other academic fields may rest on more established roles and support structures, HRD faculty acted much like business organizations in the early stages of their life cycle by expanding a high level of energy and commitment to establishing, growing, and expanding their programs in terms of curriculum, enrollments, staffing, and university internal and external relationships and linkages.

While this passion for the program and the field offered a unique characteristic and source of strength for each of the three programs, it also presents liabilities in terms of workload, continuance, staffing, and succession. With relatively small numbers of full-time faculty and a high degree of commitment to teaching, service, and research, heavy workloads appear to be the norm. In relatively small departments, turnover presents a real concern related to continuity and sustainability. Although none of the administrators interviewed appeared fearful of losing tenure lines, replacing senior faculty who were often also the founders of the respective programs was seen as a difficult challenge. As one faculty member observed: " All of us here are comfortable wearing these different hats and putting in long hours to build and grow the program. But I am not sure if we can expect that new faculty will have the same level of drive and commitment. This is not something you can write into a job description." A related theme concerned succession of senior faculty and program founders. With most universities having experienced lean years in the early and mid-1990s, several participants spoke of the missing middle. "We have a group of senior people who have been here for a long time. But we have almost no mid-career people because of the hiring freeze in the 1980s and 1990s. In recent years, we've been hiring again, but only at the assistant [professor] level. We now evenly split between full and assistants. Sustainability is a real issue here."

Individual and group interviews with masters and doctoral students at the three universities offered additional insight into these three leading HRD programs. The interviews focused on students' professional and academic backgrounds, their reasons for selecting an HRD program at the particular university, and their future professional plans and aspirations. In addition, students offered insights into the strengths and liabilities of their programs from their unique perspectives.

Many students had stopped out of higher education after their initial degrees and pursued full-time careers before returning for advanced studies. While some had worked in human resource related fields, many were career changers. Students came from areas as diverse as teaching, management, broadcasting, and counseling, and from religious and community-based organizations. When asked why they had selected the particular program, most students mentioned the reputation of faculty as a primary reason. Students had become familiar with the work of individual faculty members through books, journals, consulting work, or conference presentations. When asked why they had selected an HRD program instead of a related one in psychology, management, or industrial relations, students often cited the value congruence of the program with their own convictions and plans. As one student summarized: "Studying HRD in the School of Education gives me a degree of freedom and flexibility I would never have in a college of business. The approach here is developmental, and this fits with my personal philosophy and values." The two most prominent reasons for selecting an HRD program were related to the cross-disciplinary and

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systemic nature of the curriculum and its base in a humanistic, development-focused approach to business organizations. Several students, in fact, applauded the fact that the program was linked to education rather than business. One student explained: "I believe that the future of organizational development is in learning, and so [HRD] belongs in the School of Education. The economic and behaviorist approaches to business [taught in other departments] are simply too narrow. That's not what I want to do." While students were attracted to the broader philosophical base of HRD, several also voiced concern that this orientation might not fit well into a highly competitive business world and indicated that they were seeking a thorough grounding in business principles in order to be effective as HRD professionals.

Students also valued the fact that HRD curricula tended to be applied and focused on real world issues and that HRD faculty had much practical and current experience. Students further commented that faculty were very supportive of their professional development, and that the programs were flexible so that students could tailor it towards their individual needs. Several also commented on supportive and student-focused departmental cultures that made collaboration among students and between faculty and students easy.

Students identified several areas for improvement. Among them were limited opportunities for student funding, a relatively weak network between their department and the local business community for internships and job placements; a limited departmental infrastructure in terms of libraries, classroom equipment, meeting spaces, graduate research assistant offices; and relatively weak alumni networks. None of the three departments appeared to have formal job placement offices or formalized job search processes. While companies regularly recruited at business schools for talent, far fewer appeared to target HRD graduate programs. Instead, students reported job search strategies focused on personal and professional networks or through faculty contacts. All, however, expressed optimism about their career prospects and were looking forward to moving through the program and into professional positions. Interestingly, the vast majority of doctoral students appeared to be headed for consulting and business/organizational careers, with only the occasional student aiming to obtain an academic position in HRD university programs.

The Future of HRD Graduate Programs

The study also focused on future goals and visions by faculty and administrators. Despite the many challenges related to building and maintaining the programs, faculty and administrators appeared confident for the future of their respective programs and the field in general. While the role of HRD programs in schools of education was at times problematic, there was not doubt that the departments were secure and that, in the words of one senior administrator, "we have a home in Education and we are here to stay." Enrollments in all three programs had been strong and were predicted to remain so. Certificate programs, in particular provided a steady stream of students and served as a feeder to the degree programs. One program is planning to focus on the professional development needs of HRD professionals working in business and industry and in public and private organizations. Administrators voiced concern over being able to staff their departments with qualified faculty, and several used part-time instructors on a regular basis.

As they grow, the three departments stated similar choices with respect to enrollments and selectivity. As one faculty member observed: "I see two options for our program: Either grow the program—and this will require adding faculty who are entrepreneurial and energetic—or to grow smaller and focus more on research." A similar choice was observed by another faculty member at a different program: "I see our future as having strong masters and certificate programs and be able to run smaller doctoral cohorts and educate first-rate researchers and leaders in the field." In the third program, several faculty indicated the desire to become more stringent in their selection criteria for doctoral students in order to attract high caliber doctoral students who will want to assume leadership as future HRD faculty.

In terms of programmatic and curricular emphases, all three departments were continuing to evolve and change. This took the form of adding online courses and educational technology related content; of seeking ways to capture the complexity of HRD work in teaching and instruction; of theorizing the multifaceted and multidisciplinary nature of the field; of understanding and incorporating into research and teaching the implications of advancing technology and globalization for HRD; and of seeking to be proactive and leading the field rather than reacting to trends already in place. True to the spirit of entrepreneurialism of a young field and young departments, the level of commitment and energy among students and faculty were high, and so were the desire to excel and the passion to drive the field forward.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Framed within an institutional theory framework, this study sought to establish detailed profiles of three leading HRD programs by focusing on their genesis and current status, norms and values, challenges and plans for the future. Using site visits, individual and group interviews, document review, and observation, convergent and divergent themes emerged.

One summary observation is the uniqueness of each program in terms of curriculum focus and institutional form, which might be explained by their differential histories. One program had been established as HRD and had evolved around a cross-disciplinary body of knowledge from a variety of social and organizational science fields united by a focus on learning. A second program had emerged out of a vocational teacher preparation program and was firmly anchored within an educational context, trying to build on the connections between HRD and career and technical education. The third program had been established as a cross-departmental effort, drawing on two fields of study with a clear emphasis on organizational learning and transformation. These three program forms speak to the diversity of traditions in the field and to the breadth of HRD graduate education. Far from providing uniform program signatures, the three programs had established unique and distinct approaches to HRD. This diversity of approaches reflects the multi-faceted nature of the field and also the multiplicity of definitions of or approaches to HRD. It is upon the individual departments to clarify their approaches to HRD for their own development efforts and towards students and employers and to situate their approach within a theory of HRD that is currently underdeveloped.

In this diversity there was also unity, and this was found in process and content. There was ample evidence of passions for the field, for the development and growth of programs, for the development of students, for broadening the reach of their departments through off-campus offerings, for exploring new ways of program delivery, and for advancing theory, research, practice, and teaching in HRD. There was a sense of excitement and pride shared by faculty, administrators, and students about past accomplishment, current program status, and the possibilities for the future. Although the standing of a business-focused program within schools of education is not unproblematic (see, for example, Birema, Cseh, Ellinger, Ruona, & Watkins, 2001), the three programs appeared firmly established and secure in their academic homes, and they thought of themselves as being on the leading edge of education conceived as life long learning by individuals, groups, and organizations throughout the life span and in multiple formal and informal settings. Faculty and administrators voiced a sense of pride for their contributions to their home institutions in terms of enrollments, reach to populations not traditionally served, and breadth of curriculum content. Common goals were focused on the implications of information technology, alternative delivery methods, improving curricula in response to the complexity of contemporary organizations and institutions, and the increasingly global application of HRD. The three programs also showed a strong sense of entrepreneurial sprit, characteristic of dedicated faculty and administrators in an emerging field and relatively young departments. All participants in this study performed numerous roles as researchers, instructors, consultants, and mentors, and invested much time and energy into building and expanding the department, its curriculum offerings, and its enrollments. There was a sense of vibrant energy and optimism about the future of the field and its potential. With this energy, however, come concerns over continuation, especially with departments that will experience waves of retirement among senior faculty without sufficient mid-level academics to move into leadership positions. Careful and long-range succession planning and career development needs to be implemented to assure continuing success.

The sense of energy and passion for the field was shared by graduate students many of whom had selected HRD--after carefully considering alternative academic options--because of the multi-disciplinary curriculum and the holistic and systemic value preference of HRD. Students recognized the limitations of the program's location in schools of education but voiced strong opinions about the high quality and dedicated academic and professional preparation they received. The lack of infrastructure and support, however, may deter qualified candidates to enter the field, thus raising concerns over the lack of future academics in HRD.

The programs' plans for the future were incremental and evolutionary rather than revolutionary and included expanding program offerings, rethinking their policies regarding doctoral admissions and curricula, incorporating instructional and internet-based technology, and expanding the regional, national, and global reach of curricula and program offerings. Here, again, staffing and resource issue surface that will require careful and creative solutions.

HRD is an emerging field in the early stages of its life cycle, and a field that offers great promises in contributing to personal and organizational economic and social progress. This study contributes to new knowledge by examining institutional and curricular characteristics of academic programs and profiling three leading programs in terms of their genesis and current status, norms and values, and visions for the future. It responded to the call for increased knowledge on academic program issued by a panel of senior HRD experts and should offer insight to the

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academic HRD community, current and future on salient features, issues, and challenges of three leading US programs.

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Evaluation of a Human Resource Development Degree Program

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This study examined students and their work supervisor's perceptions of an undergraduate degree program (with a Human Resource development concentration), specifically how the program benefited them personally and professionally as well as how their organization had gained from their participation. Results identified four specific themes, program expectations, challenges, strengths/benefits and recommendations.

Keywords: Evaluation, Perceptions, Qualitative

The result of a formative evaluation, this study examined participants' perceptions of how a degree program with emphasis in Human Resource Development (HRD) benefited them personally and professionally. Popham, (1993) suggests that affect assessment, which deals with attitudes, values, and interests is an important evaluation use. While not specifically targeting feedback regarding the programs delivery method, compressed video, the evaluation did garner data that related to the increased presence of technology in delivering educational programs. Evaluation and feedback theory provide the theoretical framework for this study. These concepts are intertwined and integral to establishing and sustaining effective programming and performance improvement efforts.

The benefit of assessing educational programs is well documented in evaluation literature. As budgets are tightened and return on investment is closely scrutinized, measurement of individuals, businesses, and institutions is a vehicle for establishing accountability (Fenwick & Parsons, 2000). Perskill and Russ-Eft (2000) note that evaluation has become urgent for both internal and external customers who are asking for evidence of programs effectiveness. They also state that there is a demand for systematic useful evaluation within for-profit and non-profit local, state and federal agencies. The increased demand for evaluation is further complicated by the intangible and abstract qualities of that which is to be evaluated.

In reviewing evaluation literature numerous definitions and related methodologies can be found (Patton, 97; Chen & Rossi, 83; Scriven, 93; Whitmore, 98; Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2000). The literature provides numerous philosophies regarding the very purpose of evaluation. For example, Harles, (1986) considers evaluation to be a structural element of the process of improving the human performance, Human Performance Technology (HTP). Mark, Henry & Julnes (2000) identify four distinct purposes of evaluation as assessment of merit and worth; program and organizational improvement; oversight and compliance; and knowledge development. Preskill and Russ-Eft (2000) discuss the use of evaluation in an instrumental, political and symbolic sense.

Evaluation is often grouped into two distinct categories, formative and summative. Formative evaluation is conducted intermittently with the purpose of giving feedback to learners about their progress and providing valuable information for program developers. Formative evaluation is a recursive process focuses on trying out and revising process as a means of self-correction (Geis, 1986). Stolovich, (1978, 1982) suggests that evaluation is inherent to a well-designed system and functions within that system rather than a discrete act or a step in program development. The formative aspect of this evaluation serves to help determine what programmatic changes are indicated to meet the stakeholders' needs. Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a particular event with the purpose of summarizing what has been accomplished (Fenwick and Parsons, 2000). In addition, evaluation may consist of a look at affect assessment, which deals with attitudes, values, and interests (Popham, 1993). Whether summative or formative, the reason for educational/program evaluation is to improve the quality of the educational enterprise (Popham, 1993).

Webster's New World Dictionary (1970) defines feedback as "a process in which the factors that produce a result are themselves modified, corrected, strengthened, etc. by that result." In discussing systems thinking, Senge (1990) describes two distinct types of feedback: reinforcing and balancing. Human Performance Technology uses the general systems model to describe human performance systems. Both models include evaluation and feedback loops as design elements. Evaluation and feedback contribute to HPT's recursive dynamic, and self-correcting

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functions. Feedback is intended to affect the quantity and quality of performance. If feedback is directed at affecting, the quantity it is summative, while feedback directed at affecting the quality of performance it is formative. While both forms of feedback are critical tools for manintaining or changing performance, either will impact the quality of the behavior or the way people perform (Tosti, 1986). This summative evaluation received feedback that provides information regarding the quality and quantity of various aspects associated with participation in the program.

Background

In response to a comprehensive needs assessment that was conducted to identify the educational needs of business and industry, a degree program with a HRD concentration was introduced in the fall of 1996 at the University of Arkansas. The degree is available only to adults who are working full time, have worked at least five years and have 40 to 60 college credits which will transfer to the University. The program requires a total of 125 credit hours. The general studies section of the degree consists of 56 credit hours of English, science, social studies, fine arts/humanities, math, health and wellness and media/computers. The technical requirement section of the degree consists of 33 credit hours which can be obtained by transferring business coursework, receiving credit for work experience through the testing procedure of the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) and receiving credit for work experience or industry training by the development of a portfolio based on guidelines developed by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (1996), the American Council on Education and the National Program on Non-Collegiate Sponsored Institute. The portfolio is based on Kolb's experiential learning model. This model concentrates on including work experience in to the following 4 areas, concrete experience, observations and reflections, formation of abstract concepts and generalization and testing implications of concepts in new situations, (Kolb, 1984).

The HRD component consists of eight specific courses and a work-based internship/project. The HRD courses are skills and strategies in HRD, theory and principles in needs assessment/evaluation, communication in HRD, strategic design of HRD, theory and principles in adult education, theory and principles in team building, strategies in professional development, and leadership in HRD. The internship is a 12-credit work related project built around the HRD coursework.

The degree program, which began in fall 1996, was structured as a partnership between the University of Arkansas and community colleges throughout the state. The students completed their general studies and many of their technical requirements at the local community college then transferred to the University of Arkansas where they begin the HRD part of the program. The eight HRD courses were offered by interactive audio/video in an accelerated format meeting nine weeks rather than the standard 15 weeks. The courses met weekends to accommodate working adults. Each course was offered at one host site and three or four remote sites. After beginning with approximately 40 students at 4 sites, the program has grown to 10 sites with an enrollment of approximately 175 students, all of which are nontraditional students ranging in age from 25 to 60.

Purpose of the Study

This research explores student and supervisor perceptions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the undergraduate Human Resource Development program. Specifically, the research question examines participant's feelings about how the program benefited them personally and professionally and how their organizations benefited from their participation.

Methods

This study used qualitative methods as the primary research design. A fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its in-depth exploration of a phenomenon and its context (Densin & Lincoln, 1994; Fryer, 1991; Patton, 1990). In accordance with qualitative methods, research participants were selected using purposeful sampling. Patton (1990) suggested that the power of purposeful sampling methodology is selecting information-rich cases for the purpose of learning a great deal about issues of central importance to the research. Criterion-based purposeful sampling was used to select individual participants. To be included in the study, the participants had to meet the following requirements: (a) student participants were from the first and second program cohort, (b) student participants had completed all the HRD courses, (c) student participants had the same workplace supervisor throughout the program, (d) student participants consented to be interviewed, and (e) students consented to having their supervisor interviewed. Workplace supervisors were selected if (a) they consented to participate in the

interview, and (b) if they had supervised a student throughout the program. Eighteen students and their supervisors met all of the criteria. This represented approximately 20% of the total program participants. Participants represented the following fields: banking, health care, manufacturing, public utilities, and post-secondary education. Participants represented both supervisory and non-supervisory positions.

Telephone interviews were conducted with each student and their workplace supervisor from the sample. A structured, open-ended interview guide (Appendix A) was used for each telephone interview. The interview guide consisted of questions that explored student and supervisor evaluation of the multi site distance education degree program. Interviewees were instructed as to the purpose of the research and informed how the anonymous information would be used. Consent to participate, interview questions and responses were audio taped with the permission of the participant. Each interview averaged approximately 30 minutes and was conducted by a researcher who was familiar with the program and the instructors, but not familiar with the interviewees. While the researcher had essential understanding regarding the context of the interview questions, she had less bias regarding the participants' responses than researchers directly involved in the program. Both student and supervisor interviews were tape recorded with participant consent. Numerical codes were assigned to each interview to protect anonymity of the participants during data analysis. All interviews were subsequently transcribed and analyzed using QSR NUD-IST (1997), computer-based qualitative data analysis program.

Data Analysis

While the interview guide did not include specific questions regarding the challenges associated with participating in the program or recommendations that students and supervisors had to improve the program, these themes emerged from student and supervisor responses. These "indirect" themes included student and supervisor expectations of the program, the perceived challenges inherent to the program, strengths/benefits of the program, and recommendations for the program.

Data from each interview were coded to identify patterns in the data associated with each theme. Each student and supervisor response has been coded to provide an audit trail that describes the context of the comments. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe an audit trail as a method of logging and describing our procedures and data clearly enough so that others can understand them, reconstruct them, and scrutinize them. The trustworthiness of the study is contingent upon the audit trail being (a) complete, (b) comprehensible, and (c) systematically related to methodological approaches (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Expectations

Students identified two major expectations of the program. First was obtaining a Bachelor's degree. All students indicated this was their top priority. They had high expectations about the program because it was associated with a major university with a good reputation. The convenience of the program, the multi site locations through out the state and the weekend scheduling added to their enthusiasm about the program. The second expectation was program content. Students expected to obtain new information and/or skills. They felt the new information would be helpful in their current careers and jobs. They also indicated that they hoped the course content would help them better understand the organization they worked for. They specifically expected to obtain Human Resource theory and apply it to the job by accepting more responsibility, extending current job duties and bringing more knowledge, ideas and creativity to their organizations.

Supervisors supported students obtaining a degree mainly because they anticipated benefits to the job and the organization. They felt the degree would aid the students in managing on-the-job projects, meeting job specifications, advancing within the job/organization, developing better understanding of people, policies and procedures. The supervisors also felt that the content would be beneficial because of its focus on HRD. They indicated they expected the students to obtain a broad background in HR theory, concepts, and principles. They also felt students would be able to apply the knowledge obtained to practice and to utilize the program as a resource for networking in the larger community and with their peers. The supervisors had a strong feeling that the student's job skills would be enhanced. They specifically thought the students would gain in the ability to bring knowledge, ideas and creativity to their organization, learning new concepts that would help their organization and to extend their current duties into the development of additional training within the organization.

Both, students and supervisors expressed some degree of uncertainty with the program. They indicated that they did not know what to expect since it was different than traditional programs. The program content and the distance education method of delivery were unknowns and therefore of some concern.

Challenges

Students reported time as a major challenge to participating in the program. They indicated that attending class on Friday night and Saturday mornings caused conflict with family activities and duties. The extended times of the program, fall, spring and summer for two or three consecutive years also added to the pressure of family and job related responsibilities. The nine-week duration of the weekend classes consolidated course content, which made students rush assignments and add further to an already busy schedule. The added responsibility of attending classes and completing homework in conjunction with family and work related responsibilities made for a time management nightmare.

Students also viewed their own attitudes as a challenge. That is, they were challenged to stay focused and on task, to stay motivated to getting to class and getting the work done. They had to overcome the fear of going back to school after being out so long. Adjusting to the HRD classes was also a challenge. These classes were different from traditional classes because they were designed for the non-traditional student, the adult learner. The design of the classes allowed for more student involvement, participation and group work. Some students indicated that some team members did not participate which created problems since all group members shared a grade. Also the use of technology in the classroom caused concern. None of the students had any experience using the technology that is involved in distance education. They reported that it took time to get used to the cameras, microphones and other equipment in the classroom.

Supervisors reported very little in the way of challenges. They did however; mention that sometimes work schedules and load had to be adjusted to allow for class attendance. They also indicated that they felt the major challenge was on the shoulders of the student.

Strengths/Benefits

Students perceived benefits fell into three categories. First was learning environment. They indicated that the nontraditional nature of the program and students was a positive factor. As nontraditional students they had many and varied experiences and backgrounds which contributed to the overall learning in the classes. They felt that nontraditional students were more serious about doing course work, wanting to do their best, getting things done, not getting sidetracked or off task and working with group activities. Academic teachers and advisors were also viewed as a positive. Students thought that the instructors were caring, knowledgeable, and involved in the program because they wanted to be and were interested in helping students learn and finish the program. They perceived that they could talk to their instructors at any time about class or professional concerns and felt that the instructors were very good about explaining assignments and other class tasks to the point that they were easy to understand. Students felt that access to the portfolio process, which allowed them to receive credit for prior work experience benefited them by reducing the time needed to finish the degree.

The second category of perceived benefits was personal. Students felt a high degree of personal accomplishment and satisfaction by their involvement in the program. They indicated they had gained skills, knowledge and maturity. The overall personal benefit was gaining a bachelor's degree. Many of them had a long time goal of finishing their degree. They found it very fulfilling to finally obtain a degree.

The third category was personal/professional. The focus of this area was on benefits that were personal but could also be defined as professional. Students felt the program helped them with promotions, pay increased, more job responsibilities, and improving self-concept. However, some students indicated they had received no promotions or recognition from being involved in the program. They viewed the program as helpful in forming networks of other professionals from throughout the state. They felt that this networking helped keep up with the profession as well as gain insight into how different agencies and organizations operated. Students indicated they benefited from the program because it was set at a time and day that did not conflict with work, which motivated them to stay with the program, and enabled them to finish the program more quickly.

Supervisors commended the university and the professors for offering this program statewide to students with such a wide background and experience. They indicated that they admired the students for the time and effort they were willing to put into obtaining their degree. They also felt the class scheduling, on weekends, was a great benefit because it did not interfere with job performance. Supervisors reported that the students increased knowledge benefited the organization through more participation in training and other activities. One supervisor indicated that

several concepts and theories learned in class were integrated into their organization. Others stated that student performance had improved since involvement in the program.

Recommendations

Students made several suggestions for improving the program. These suggestions could be grouped into three categories. First were entrance requirements and program policies. Students indicated their belief that access to the program should be limited to students that had completed the equivalent of an associate's degree. Students viewed this as a minimum requirement because it enhanced the probability of graduating in a two-year period. Students indicated that it was difficult to complete the HRD courses and have general education requirements to fulfill.

Students also suggested there should be separate "tracks" for those who have managerial or supervisory experience and those who do not. They felt this would accelerate the pace of the courses and provide a more homogenous class profile. They felt that students with no managerial experience find it difficult to comprehend the discussions of those who have supervisory experience. Likewise, students with substantial supervisory work history felt that the courses were less stimulating when elementary concepts had to be discussed for those who had no managerial experience.

The second category was teaching methods. Students recommended that the program incorporate more subject matter experts from area business and industry. They felt that this would provide a practitioner's perspective that would be beneficial. They felt that each topic should include the perspective of a full-time practitioner working in that topic area. They felt this would help the content become more relevant. Group work and practice was viewed as beneficial to learning. Students felt that this practice should be extended to each course and teaching at the "technical" level should me minimized. They valued the "hands on" approach and wanted to see it expanded. Likewise, some students indicated that various program parts should have been geared toward more "practical, everyday things" and less emphasis on the book.

The third category was course content. Students indicated that the program should include course work regarding the legal issues associated with HRD. Specifically, they suggested including labor law studies as part of the curriculum. They indicated that this was an area of growing concern for themselves and their supervisors. Some felt that there was too much emphasis on training and needs assessment. Students wanted broader exposure to assessment topics rather than an in-depth view of training needs assessment.

Conclusions

This study speaks to the unanticipated benefit associated with incorporating qualitative data collection in programmatic evaluation. While the interview guide provided a framework for eliciting programmatic information from participants, interviewers took great care not to lead participant responses. Not only was constructive data gathered regarding the perceived effectiveness of the programs structure and content the respondents allowed us to peak into the affective issues that students and their supervisors associated with the program. This in turn gives the evaluators to better understand the program content.

Both students and their supervisors reported that students became a "better worker" as a result of involvement in the University of Arkansas Human Resource Development program. Specifically they agreed that students had more knowledge, focus, confidence and initiative as a result of the program. They indicated that these traits aided students in motivating others, forming networks, understanding work relations/systems, and thinking through problems in a more informed manner.

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Appendix A

Student Interview Guide

1. The concepts / skills that were taught in the HRD program included: communication, leadership, principles of adult learning, instruction and facilitation, needs assessment / research, team building, and professional development. Describe how you applied the concepts that were presented in the HRD program.
2. How has your organization benefited by your participation in the HRD program?
3. How has the HRD program benefited your personally?
4. How has the HRD program benefited your professionally?

Supervisor Interview Guide

1. The concepts / skills that were taught in the HRD program included: communication, leadership, principles of adult learning, instruction and facilitation, needs assessment / research, team building, and professional development. Describe how [name of student] applied the concepts that were presented in the HRD program.
2. How has your organization benefited by [name of student] participation in the HRD program?
3. How has the HRD program benefited [name of student] personally?
4. How has the HRD program benefited [name of student] professionally?

Assessment of the Graduate Human Resources Development Program, St. John Fisher College

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The first formal assessment of the Graduate Human Resource Development program at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, NY is conducted. This assessment from the learners' perspective is examined at five levels: Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation and the fifth by Hamblin. The assessment is conducted using self-report information about learners matriculated into the program. The findings suggest that there are significant differences between groups of Learners in Level 2: Learning and Level 5: Ultimate Value.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Levels of Evaluation, Program Assessment

Academic program assessment is a key element for a college or university's continued accreditation. It also plays a significant role in the status of professional accreditation. Assessment allows academic programs to document the quality and success of their curriculum and identify new opportunities for growth and development (Schwindt, 1995). The purpose of this preliminary study is to conduct a program assessment of the Master of Science in Human Resource Development program at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. This study is a first attempt to establish a model for discovery of the impact that the current curriculum presented in this program-of-study has on the current student population and the alumni of the program. This examination is not designed to validate the data collection instruments used nor is it intended to compare outcomes with other graduate academic programs. It is designed to conduct an academic program assessment utilizing a model typically employed in training evaluation.

St. John Fisher College graduated its first class of six Masters of Science candidates from the Graduate Human Resource Development (MSHRD) program in 1999. These six individuals led the way for what has grown to be an expected graduating class of 17 in the year 2002. Started in fall of 1997, the program is still in its infancy. As with any new instructional program, it requires assessment as an essential component of its development to provide continuous improvement.

Satisfaction with the program, the acquisition of knowledge (learning), the application of learning (behavioral changes), changes in the workplace due to students' behavioral changes, and the benefit's recognized by students' workplace are at the center of this inquiry. Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation with the addition of Hamblin's fifth level were used to guide this examination. This framework provides a set of standards that are within the scope of the inquiry.

For the purposes of this study, program effectiveness is determined by the extent to which Learners, defined as students who matriculated into the MSHRD program, perceive themselves as successful. Learners are separated into three groups: (a) graduates of the program; (b) current program candidates; and (c) candidates who matriculated into the program but have not taken a class in the previous year and examined through self-report data. Analyses of the data on these groups are conducted using Kirkpatrick's (1998b) four-level hierarchy of evaluation model with the addition of Hamblin's fifth level of focus. The five levels are Level 1: Reaction, Level 2: Learning, Level 3: Behavior, Level 4: Results, and Level 5: Ultimate Value. This examination seeks answers to six questions:

Q1. Is there a difference in satisfaction levels between the three groups of Learners?
Q2. Is there a difference in perceived learning—skill, knowledge, and attitudes—between the three groups of learners?
Q3. Is there a difference in perceived behavioral changes—both in the classroom and on-the-job—between the three groups of learners?
Q4. Is there a perceived anticipation and recognition of changes, contributions to the workplace learning and demonstrated leadership between the three groups of Learners?
Q5. Is there a difference in career advancement and earnings increases between the three groups of Learners?
Q6. What is the demographic composition of program participants?

Conceptual Framework

Assessment is clearly the preferred term for this process of an academic program. However, the means with which the assessment is conducted is through evaluation; the terms for this study are intertwined. The literature on the two

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terms in the educational context, however, is not consistent. The terms have been defined in varying ways and may be distinctly different, yet one author's definition of one term may be the definition another author uses for the other term.

The key is not in definition, but in how the gathered information is used and its relationship to practices on campus (Palomba & Banta, 1999). It is important to recognize that the terminology has been, is, and will most likely continue to be used in varying, confusing, and sometimes contradictory ways, and that colleges are free to use the terminology they find most suitable. It is within this spirit that this assessment of the MSHRD program is conducted. For the purposes of this study assessment refers to the overall process of program appraisal to determine its effectiveness and value using the means of evaluation. Evaluation is the appraisal of each of the five levels--reaction, learning, behavior, results, and ultimate value--from the perception of the Learner to determine Learner success. The value and responsibility in conducting both (or either) assessment and (or) evaluation is the use of the information to improve the program and benefit the Learner (AAHE, 1996; Farmer & Napieralski, 1997; Haworth, 1996).

Why Assess?

There is no question that the concept of assessment has been around for many years (Farmer & Napieralski,1997; Madaus & Kellaghan, 1992). Since the 1980's, however, there has been increased emphasis to use assessment to improve the quality of learning (Angelo, 1999; Banta, Lunt, Black & Oblander, 1996; Lipschultz & Hit, 1999; Weise, 1992). Students, faculty, courses, programs, departments, and institutions have all been the focus of assessment and evaluation efforts.

The assessment movement is increasingly becoming more important (Donald, 1997; Banta, Black, & Ward, 1999). At the post-baccalaureate level, ensuring quality and improvement through program assessment is somewhat rare (Banta, Black, & Ward, 1999; Haworth, 1996). Ongoing assessment activities should be about improving learning and for the ultimate benefit of the student (Angelo, 1999; Baird, 1996; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Syverson, 1996).

The MSHRD Connection to Evaluation

The selection of the means with which to conduct this assessment by using levels of evaluation is one particularly suited to use for the MSHRD program. Kirkpatrick (1998a) explains:
The four levels are all important, and they should be understood by all professionals in the fields of education, training, and development, whether they plan, coordinate, or teach . . . whether the programs are conducted in education, business, or industry . . . . In human resource development (HRD) circles, these four levels are recognized widely, often cited, and often used as a basis for research and articles dealing with techniques for applying one or more of the four levels" (pp. xv-xvi).

Incorporation of the five levels of evaluation in this assessment study is program appropriate, while seeking to address the complexities of learning with an imaginative and individualized approach, one that reflects the character of the individuality of the program and local conditions (Banta, 1997; Farmer & Napieralski, 1997; Palomba & Banta,1999).

Relevance to the Field of HRD

The pursuit of graduate education is becoming a trend among HRD professionals. However, not all are attending programs that specialize in HRD. For lack of program availability, incompatibility of curriculum with organizational needs, many enroll in programs designed for allied fields such as business, sociology, education, and human services. Thus, it becomes critical for academic programs specializing HRD to conduct various forms of assessment activities to determine whether or not the curriculum meets the needs of the learners and the workplace. Employer sponsored tuition assistance programs scrutinize these programs to determine the return on their investment—will the employee/student learn relevant information that can be applied in the workplace? Individuals making the educational investment must also be satisfied with the experience and, at minimum, believe that they have learned and can demonstrate competence after completing a program-of-study.

Levels of Evaluation

The standard and most prevalent evaluation model in the field of HRD is the four-level Kirkpatrick model (Reynolds, 1998; Rothwell & Sredl, 2000). This model was chosen to guide this study as a first step in program

evaluation for three reasons: (a) it is the most familiar in the field; (b) it is intended to measure the areas of interest to the specified academic institution; and (c) the four levels guide the development of questionnaire domains. Kirkpatrick (1998a) originally introduced his concept of the four levels of evaluation in 1959; although he makes some changes to his guidelines, he currently concludes that the four levels--reaction, learning, behavior and results--to evaluate training programs have remained the same. Questions associated with each level explored are provided:
Level 1: Reaction. "What did the participants like or dislike?"
Level 2: Learning. "How did the participants change by the end of the program?"
Level 3: Behavior. "How much did the participant change subsequently affected job behavior or performance?"
Level 4: Results. "What are the results produced by behavioral change?"
Hamblin's 5th: Ultimate Value. How do results affect the organization or individual over time? (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000).

Here, we define learning as changes in attitudes, improvements in knowledge, and/or increases in a skill that participants (Learners) experience because they have attended a program (Kirkpatrick, 1998b). Level 2 evaluation measures not only the learning of the program participants, but also the effectiveness of the instructors. If failure occurs, it provides the opportunity to look for ways of being more effective in the future. The third level of evaluation measures the use of learning on the job; in other words, how well did the learning transfer? This study measures perceived behavioral changes--both in the classroom and on-the-job--from the perspective of the Learner. Kirkpatrick (1998b) defines his fourth and final level of evaluation as the final results due to participants' attendance at a program. The Learners' perceived anticipation and recognition of change, contributions to workplace learning, and their demonstrated leadership are measured in this study via the surveys completed by Learners. Hamblin (1974) takes the concept of evaluation to an even higher level than did Kirkpatrick. The ultimate value level or fifth level of evaluation examines the valued ends, which Hamblin equates to financial and economic outcomes--an organization's profit and loss. For the Learner, financial and economic outcomes are most evident through career advancement and earnings increase. Furthering their career is the reason most people undertake the costly and challenging quest of an advanced degree (Baxter, 1993).

Methodology

Population

The population (N = 70) consists of three categories of Learners: (a) graduates of, (b) current candidates for, and (c) candidates who matriculated in, but have not taken a class in the previous year, the Master of Science in Human Resource Development (MSHRD) program at St. John Fisher College. For the purposes of this examination, this entire population was surveyed. Participants in category (a) graduates, are referred to as Program Graduates; participants in category (b) current candidates, are referred to as Program Candidates; and participants in category (c) candidates who matriculated, but have not taken a class in the previous year, are referred to as Program Leavers.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two questionnaires from Program Graduates, Program Candidates, and Program Leavers of the Master of Science HRD. One questionnaire assesses Program Graduates and Program Candidates (Questionnaire 1) and the other instrument assesses Program Leavers (Questionnaire 2).

Questionnaire content and structure. Questionnaire 1 is composed of two sections: (a) 10 questions and (b) 12 agreement statements. The 10 questions asked for demographic information to determine age, race and ethnicity, gender, date of program completion or expected completion, salary upon program entry and current salary or respondents. The 12 statements assessed respondents' agreement using a five-point Likert-type scale: (a) Strongly Disagree; (b) Disagree; (c) Neutral; (d) Agree; (e) Strongly Agree. Here, participants were asked to rate statements regarding content areas presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Statement Number, Level of Evaluation, and Statement Content from Learner and Employer Surveys.*

Number	Evaluation Level/ Description	Statement Topic
S1	1/Reaction	Satisfaction with the courses in the MSHRD program
S2	1/Reaction	Satisfaction with the quality of the instructors in the MSHRD program
S3	1/Reaction	Satisfaction with the intellectual challenge of the MSHRD program
S4	2/Learning	Level of skill
S5	2/Learning	Level of knowledge
S6	2/Learning	Assessment of attitude
S7	3/Behavior	Transfer of learning to the job.
S8	4/Results	Anticipation and recognition of rapid changes in jobs, careers, work groups, and organizations
S9	4/Results	Contribution to workplace learning
S10	4/Results	Demonstration of leadership in providing strategies and practical solutions to the business challenges affecting the workplace
S11	5/Ultimate Value	Enhanced job/career opportunities
S12	5/Ultimate Value	Increased earning potential/financial benefit

Similar to Questionnaire 1, Questionnaire 2 has two sections: (a) 12 questions and (b) 12 agreement statements. The 12 questions asked for demographic information to determine age, race and ethnicity, gender, date of program completion of undergraduate degree, undergraduate degree major, date of entry into the MSHRD program, date of last course taken in the MSHRD program, number of credits earned in the program, perception of matriculation status in the program, area of employment when they entered the program, and current area employment. Program Leavers were then asked to respond to the same 12 statements assessing their agreement using the five-point Likert-type scale: (a) Strongly Disagree; (b) Disagree; (c) Neutral; (d) Agree; (e) Strongly Agree (Table 1).

Survey Administration

Surveys were administered as unsupervised mail-response-questionnaires. Program Graduates, Program Candidates, and Program Leavers received their surveys in a packet containing a letter of introduction that included consent, instructions for the process to complete and return the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope addressed to the researcher's home. Packets were sent via first-class mail by the US Postal Service.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were calculated. ANOVA was employed to determine statistical differences.

Survey Response Analyses

Demographic information for the entire population and each of the three groups was summarized to provide descriptions of their characteristics. Attributes such as gender, age, year of undergraduate degree receipt, and field of work were examined.

Limitations

This study has five primary limitations. First, the population is small. A total of 70 matriculated Learners have entered the program since its inception in 1997. Second, the primary researcher is one of the Learners--a Program Candidate--which leads to the possibility of bias in both the creation of the survey instruments and in the reporting and interpretation of the results of the study. Third, since this is a preliminary examination with the intention of developing a model for program evaluation, the survey instruments used in the study were not tested for content and construct validity. Fourth, data were collected through self-report surveys therefore bias responses are expected. In other words, this inquiry, most likely, reflects primarily Level 1 results. Finally, the questionnaires employed in this examination were not tested for content or construct validity. The purpose of this study was to conduct pilot research that will lead to more rigorous examinations in the future.

Findings

Response Rate

The overall response rate from the Learners is 64.29% (N = 45). The combined response rate for Program Graduates and Program Candidates is 76.00% (n = 38). There was a low number of responses from Program Leavers

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(n = 7). The response rates for this evaluation of the program from Program Graduates and Program Candidates are 86.67% and 71.43% respectively. In contrast, the Program Leavers have a low, but probably more typical, response rate of 35.00%. Program Leavers comprised 20 of the 70 Learners, producing an attrition rate for the MSHRD program of 28.57%. However, 42.86% of the Program Leavers that responded to the survey indicate that they plan on completing the MSHRD program.

Demographic Information

Answering Q6, the demographic data from the study provides a demographic description of the typical MSHRD student at St. John Fisher College. The population is predominantly female, although the Program Candidate group is fairly evenly split. A much higher percentage of the Program Leaver group are female--71.43%. This area is one that deserves further study. It should be noted that the numbers of Learners graduating each year are increasing. This finding is an indication that the program is growing supporting the notion that the demand for master's degrees is increasing in general (Baxter, 1993). This growth in the number of Learners reinforces the importance of assessment as a tool to improve the program.

The population is 80.00% Caucasian with. To date, there are no African American MSHRD program Graduates. This information seems to point to considering ways to increase the diversity of the Learner base with incoming Learners.

The range of ages is dispersed somewhat equally among three groups: (a) the Between 26 and 30, (b) the Between 31 and 40; and the Between 41 and 50 groups, with the final quarter of Learners being either 25 or under or Over 51. This information doesn't focus on the fact that 42.22% of the Learners are under 30. The program is heavily drawing the under 30 Leamer.

To date, 92.10% of Learners do complete or plan to complete the program in less than three years, with 68.42% finishing in two years or less. The program seems to fit the need for obtaining a degree in a relatively short time period.

Furthermore, findings indicate that there is an increase in the number of Learners entering the program who are already in the field of Human Resources, either in development or management (i.e., compensation, benefits, labor relations, employee assistance) or in a combination of both development and management. This finding may indicate increasing interest in and acceptance of the program by professionals already in the field. Graduates, based on the responses, are finding jobs in the field. When they started the program, only 23.07% of Program Graduates were employed in the HR field. Now, 61.54% of them are currently are employed in the HR field. There is a less dramatic, but nevertheless actual, shift by Program Candidates moving into HR related positions, indicating that they are finding new positions in the field prior to completing their degrees. It seems logical to assume, based on this evidence, that Learners are realizing enhanced career opportunities by being in the MSHRD program. This outcome is born out in their responses to Level 5: Ultimate Value statements, as well.

It seems reasonable to expect the Program Graduates rate highest in their responses to the twelve statements on the survey (Table 1) and the Program Leavers to rate lowest in their responses to the twelve statements on the survey, with the Program Candidates somewhere in between. The quantitative findings do indeed bear this out overall. Within the Program Candidates group are Learners who began the program recently and have thus far have had one semester of classes. It may be premature to survey these individuals as part of the evaluation. The group of Program Candidates also may contain individuals who may, at some future date, become Program Leavers, deciding to complete the program.

Table 2 presents a summary of means and standard deviations for responses to survey statements by Program Graduates, Program Candidates, Program Leavers, and Learners. Here, responses to all statements for all groups with only one exception were above the midpoint of 3.00, indicating an overall positive measure of Learner success. Program Leavers have the one exception in the area of increased earnings in which they did not rate as highly as either Program Graduates or Program Candidates. It may be reasonable to conclude that increased earnings are a longer-term result of the program. The high standard deviations within Level 3: Behavior and Level 5: Ultimate Results are an indication of the variety within the responses of Program Graduates and Program Candidates, as well as for Program Leavers. All three groups, Program Graduates, Program Candidates, and Program Leavers, had their highest ratings--means of 4.85, 4.46, and 3.86 (which tied with two other statements for Program Leavers), respectively--in knowledge improvement. Level 2: Learning, was the highest rating of the five levels for both Program Graduates and Program Candidates. Perhaps these ratings are tied to expectations of a college education. Program Leavers had their highest rating in Level 1: Reaction, indicating a high level of satisfaction.

For the group classified as Program Leavers, the name is misleading, at least for those who responded. Had more of those that have not taken a class in the last year responded, the results may have indicated otherwise.

Although almost 43.00% of the Program Leavers responding to the survey plan to complete the program, it seems reasonable that there would be a lower rating from the group as a whole when compared to Program Graduates and Program Candidates. Because so few Program Leavers responded, it is difficult to identify any trend in why Learners

Table 2. *Summary of means and standard deviations for responses to survey statements by Program Graduates, Program Candidates, Program Leavers, and Learners.*

		Learners							
		Graduates (n = 13)		Candidates (n = 25)		Leavers (n = 7)		All Learners (N = 45)	
S#	Statement Content	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Level 1: Reaction									
S1	Courses	4.46	0.66	4.08	0.70	3.71	1.25	4.13	0.81
S2	Instructors	4.38	0.65	4.16	0.55	3.86	1.35	4.18	0.75
S3	Intellectual Challenge	4.62	0.65	4.20	0.82	3.86	1.35	4.27	0.89
Level 2: Learning									
S4	Skill Improvement	4.69	0.48	4.42	0.81	3.71	1.38	4.39	0.88
S5	Knowledge Improvement	4.85	0.38	4.46	0.61	3.86	0.69	4.48	0.64
S6	Attitude Improvement	4.42	0.67	3.72	0.79	3.57	0.98	3.89	0.84
Level 3: Behavior									
S7	Transfer Learning	4.08	1.04	3.79	1.10	3.57	1.40	3.84	1.12
Level 4: Results									
S8	Anticipate Changes	4.15	0.69	3.88	0.74	3.43	0.53	3.89	0.72
S9	Contribute to Learning	3.85	0.80	3.88	0.74	3.57	1.40	3.82	0.87
S10	Leadership Role	4.09	1.04	3.83	0.76	3.29	1.50	3.81	0.99
Level 5: Ultimate Value									
S11	Enhanced Opportunities	3.92	1.12	3.78	0.82	3.00	1.29	3.70	1.01
S12	Increased Earnings	4.08	1.19	3.74	1.09	2.71	1.25	3.68	1.20

Note: The highest rating possible is 5.

leave the program. Obtaining this information through some other means may provide valuable insight.

Although the overall mean ratings for the statements and the levels of evaluation decrease from Program Graduates to Program Candidates and decrease further from Program Candidates to Program Leavers, there is no statistically significant difference between the groups in perceived satisfaction levels; perceived behavioral changes; and perceived anticipation and recognition of changes, contributions to workplace learning, and demonstrated leadership.

Summary Analysis of Research Question

Q1. Is there a difference in satisfaction levels between the three groups of Learners? According to these data, all Learners rated their perceived satisfaction levels highly on the survey.

Q2. Is there a difference in perceived learning—skill, knowledge, and abilities—between the three groups of learners? The results from the ANOVA identified statistical differences between Program Graduates and Program Leavers (Where SS= 4.52, df= 2, MS=2.26, F= 4.36, P= .02) supporting the idea that Program Graduates are perhaps more learned, possessing more advanced skills, increased knowledge, and improved attitudes than Program Leavers. However, Program Candidates who are in the middle and not statistically different from either group. It

seems the best strategy to increase perceived learning for the Program Candidates to continue to move toward graduation and become Program Graduates.

Q3. Is there a difference in perceived behavioral changes—both in the classroom and on-the-job—between the three groups of learners? Findings indicate that there is no significant difference in perceived behavioral changes between the three groups of Learners. Both Program Graduates and Program Candidates rated themselves highly in the area of behavior. It's important to keep in mind that, according to Kirkpatrick (1998b), even if the Learner has the opportunity, he or she may not apply the learning immediately, or indeed, ever. Changes in future behavior need to be measured in subsequent studies.

Q4. Is there a perceived anticipation and recognition of changes, contributions to the workplace learning and demonstrated leadership between the three groups of Learners? The three statements on the survey used to answer Q4 are drawn directly from the mission of the program. The findings show no significant difference in perceived anticipation and recognition of changes, contributions to workplace learning, and demonstrated leadership between the three groups of Learners. Although Program Graduates rated themselves just slightly lower than Program Candidates rated themselves in the means for contribution to learning, the job requirements or workplace situation for the Program Graduate may be a limiting factor.

Q5. What is the demographic composition of program participants? The study finds a statistically significant difference in career advancement and earnings increase between the groups of Learners, the topic of Q5. Program Graduates and Program Candidates, although not significantly different from each other, are both different from Program Leavers. As was mentioned earlier, more Program Candidates are entering the program already in the field of HRD and entering at higher salaries than did Program Graduates. The positive response to statement S12 is verified by the examination of salary information from the demographic portion of the study. While career opportunity and growth cannot necessarily be measured in increased salary dollars, a study of the data shows that Program Graduates have, indeed, advanced their careers and increased their median income by 45.50% since beginning the program. Because Program Candidates are entering the program with higher median salaries to start, future increases may not be as dramatic. On the other hand, graduates of the program have had, at most, two years since graduation. It may be that Ultimate Value takes time to ascertain. Examination of the increase in earnings for Learners is an area for ongoing assessment.

Relevance of Findings

The findings of statistically significant differences between groups of Learners at two of the five levels of evaluation, indicate benefits of the MSHRD program in the areas of learning and ultimate value. Although there are no found significant differences between Program Graduates, Program Candidates, and Program Leavers in satisfaction, behavior, or results levels, the study provides evidence of agreement on all levels of evaluation from both learners, indicating learner success (especially for Program Graduates in learning and ultimate value) and program effectiveness.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this preliminary examination, we conclude that there are statistically significant differences between Program Graduates, Program Candidates, and Program Leavers at certain levels of evaluation. We further conclude that on all five levels of evaluation-- Level 1: Reaction, Level 2: Learning, Level 3: Behavior, Level 4: Results, and Level 5: Ultimate Value--the Learners, based on their perceived success, rate the program's effectiveness highly. The MSHRD department at St. John Fisher College must keep in mind that in spite of the positive responses in this study, recommendations were offered to improve the program and the department. Thus, they should not become complacent as Schwindt (1995) advises based on his study. Possible program improvements are presented and recommendations for future improvements to subsequent studies are noted.

Developing an assessment program is complex and time consuming (Banta, Lund, Black, & Oblander, 1996; Barker & Folger, 1996; Gray, 1997). Barker and Folger go on to point out that consistency in leadership is a crucial factor. This paper provides an example of a program evaluation design, implementation, outcomes and lessons learned. Assessment is a non-linear, continuing, and circular process (Farmer & Napieralski, 1997; Wright, 1993). This study is the first in the MSHRD program assessment plan, but it is just one part of that ongoing iterative process.

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National Comparison of Graduate Level Human Resource Development Programs

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The field of HRD is evolving into a discipline that is increasingly recognized in organizations and the educational community. The rapidly changing professional world, coupled with shifting demographics, technological advancements, and opportunities for lifelong learning, has placed high expectations on HR practitioners. In order to provide a standard for best practices, continual assessment and evaluation of the educational preparation for the HRD professional is essential. This study provides benchmarking information for graduate level HRD programs.

Keywords: Human Resource Development, Graduate Education, Accreditation

Human resource and workforce development is increasingly an essential component of an organization's strategic planning processes and overall success. Experienced and educated human resource professionals are needed in this evolving field. In order to prepare individuals to meet the increasing demands of the workplace, developmental and educational opportunities must be available. These learning experiences may take the form of on-the-job training and development, a coaching or mentoring situation, cross-functional training, or formal education. Often, human resource development (HRD) professionals become the stewards over the training, education and development of an organization's workforce. Thus, HRD professionals must be highly competent and well educated themselves. To support this need, the number of academic programs designed specifically for human resource practitioners specializing in training and development, Organization Development and career development steadily increased over time.

This study examines 68 of these programs to determine similarities and differences in program design. As the field of HRD matures, standardization and consistency in professional practice becomes critical. HRD academic programs provide practitioners with foundations by which to practice. Thus, an examination of HRD academic program design is imperative.

The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast graduate level programs in human resource development (HRD). In other words, "How do graduate HRD programs compare to one another with regard to program details, curriculum, admission and graduate requirements, student demographics, and mission statements?" Specifically, programs that include organization development (OD), training and development (T&D), and/or career development in their curriculum are examined.

Theoretical Framework

Organizations in every sector have been impacted by the changing trends over the past 50 years. These changes have increased the need for competent, knowledgeable HRD professionals. Mergers, downsizing, reorganizations, and technological advances have created work environments that are continuously evolving. Trainers, organization development consultants, labor relations specialists, and career counselors are just some of the positions that are becoming needed and prevalent in the modern workforce. In order to develop trained, competent professionals, a combination of experience and education must be applied. A discussion about workforce needs, professional roles and required competencies provides a foundation for this examination.

Workforce Needs Linked to HRD Roles and Competencies

It is important that the HRD practitioner not only be able to adapt to change and diversity in organizations, but to become a champion of change efforts. In order for HRD professionals to be taken seriously and considered credible, a combination of theoretical background and practical experience must be applied to organizational circumstances. In this sense, a distinct educational experience may be the deciding factor in one's competence and broad knowledge. Understanding the needs and expectations that organizations have will enable HRD professionals to assume the role of strategic partner.In order to become effective in an HRD role, understanding the industry the organization serves is a critical component of success. Gaining the attention of an organization's population can only

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be accomplished when one is credible and articulate. The successful professional is able to speak to and work with the culture and mission of both employees and management alike. More recently, understanding technology and the changes it brings to the industry has become imperative. One important role that HRD is increasingly assuming in organizations is assisting in solving internal performance problems (Laird, 1985). In order to become effective in developing solutions to these issues, an understanding of the organization is essential. Weighty expectations come with this involvement in an organization's climate and culture. The HRD function must develop a reputation to be highly responsive, knowledgeable, and continually successful in its undertakings. Frequent and consistent communication is an essential trait for promoting this view of the HRD team. It is also important for the HRD effort to reflect the organization's culture and mission (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1994). This alignment shows consistency with executive management and reinforces the organization's view on how it should support those it serves.

The Role of Strategic Partner. As the field of human resources evolves into the role of strategic partner for an organization rather than "just the personnel office," there is a heavier emphasis on the professionalism of HRD practitioners that was not as prevalent in former decades (Chalofsky & Reinhart, 1988). The ability to address strategic business needs is a concept that elevates the HRD professional to a position of influence within organizations. Unlike the personnel director of years ago, the opportunity to participate in business decisions and advise from an HRD standpoint has been a long sought-after role by the human resource arena. This responsibility must be accompanied by strong problem solving skills and diagnostic capacity. Among these traits, a sense of leadership and the ability to project long-term goals is another critical factor that businesses are seeking in HRD professionals today. More and more, organizations are looking to human resource professionals to participate in strategic planning initiatives (Flores & Fadden, 2000). This reaction raises the bar in terms of skills and abilities that practitioners should hone.

McLagan (1989) lists five key roles that effective HRD professionals must possess. These include competency assessment, performance management, professional development, job design, and career planning. Related literature also notes the link between human resource practices and financial success of organizations (Rynes & Trank, 1999). Organizational culture, employee relations, and organizational learning contribute greatly to the workplace environment, employee attitude and morale, and consequently to customer satisfaction. Focusing on the three primary components of HRD frames the need for advanced degree programs: Training and Development, Organization Development, and Career Development.

Training and Development Trainers come in frequent contact with employees and management staff. The trainer's role is no doubt a highly visible one. Noe (1999) identifies several competencies that trainers must reflect in their interactions. These include industry understanding, adult learning knowledge, feedback and writing skill, objective preparation, knowledge of training and career development theories, delegation skill, coaching, and effective group facilitation. Behind the scenes, trainers must also be able to rely on computer competence, data analysis, research ability, facilities assessment, project and records management, cost benefit analysis, and business understanding.

In response to the shifting demographic of the workforce, changes from traditional curriculum to one based on the theory of multiple intelligences have been found to have a positive impact on learning (Mettetal, Jordan, & Harper, 1997). It is important for instructional designers to be aware of different learning styles and to provide opportunities for the learner to focus on individual strengths in reaching desired objectives. From a strategic standpoint, it is desirable for these training and human performance practices to be linked somehow with compensation (Bassi & Van Buren, 1999). In order to maintain a competitive advantage, organizations must be committed to reward and recognize employees who regularly perform at a higher level after acquiring new skills and competencies. In this example, compensation and training and development practices are connected to achieve maximum success of a joint HR function.

Organization Development (OD). With massive changes in the workplace, considerable attention has recently focused on developing and changing organizations to perform at peak levels. OD "...consists of long-term change efforts directed toward individuals, groups, and organizations that are designed to improve decision making, problem solving, and group or organizational culture" (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, p. 9). OD consultants may be internal or external professionals asked to function as change agents. A study conducted by Church, Waclawski, and Burke (1996) embraced the idea of OD practitioners as facilitators of change. Here, business leaders identified three critical competencies. These competencies included (a) an awareness and understanding of aspects of organization change management, (b) a style conducive to influencing the organization and its decision-makers, and (c) the capacity to deal with the change process and the ambiguity it brings. Dealing with change can often be demanding by itself and dealing with change inside an organization is particularly challenging to an external consultant. In their research, Church et al found two significant trends in the experiences of OD practitioners. First, a strong positive correlation was made between level and years of experience in the OD field and attaining a higher tolerance for the

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ambiguity related to continual change. The second finding showed a significant positive correlation between more academic courses and professional training and a higher tolerance for this ambiguity. These results relate to the state of the field in that ambiguity is encountered in the majority of HRD positions. While practical experience shows to be a critical necessity in implementing and continually dealing with the issues faced in this challenging profession, education is extremely important in possessing the knowledge behind effective HRD efforts.

Career Development. As a result of increased training opportunities and a focus on improving the quality of work life for employees, career development specialists are often needed to assist the workforce in making career decisions. The focus on lifelong learning has shifted the responsibility of individual professional development from organizations to individuals (Hall, 1986). The changing demographic of the workforce has prompted 'flatter' organizations and thus, less chance for traditional advancement. Employees must assess their current positions, career options, lifestyles, and the likelihood of advancement within the organization in selecting a self-directed plan. In this sense, the involvement of the employee and the employer is ideal in achieving the most individualized support of career goals. Employers may offer training opportunities, company certification programs, cross training options, educational assistance, or a career resource center. The career development professional may assist the individual in selecting the development options that are most suited to their specific interests and goals.

In implementing career resource options for employees, organizations should align three primary areas: the company vision, the problem or initiating reason, and any foreseen changes (Koontz, Theis, & Audette, 1998). Executive management and HRD staff must also be involved in the communication of a career resource effort. If career consultants are available for employees, it is essential that these consultants are trained and experienced professionals. An effective career counselor should develop skills in observing, questioning, coaching, feedback, relationship building, and competency identification (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992). Other competencies such as self-knowledge, business and adult learning understanding are necessary to develop a well-rounded ability to assist individuals in their personal and career growth. In career counselor roles, HRD practitioners must possess the experience to effectively interact with employees. However, a theoretical background in career development links practical application to educational knowledge base.

The need for HRD professionals to engage in advanced studies is clear. Moreover, in order for these professionals to function effectively in their varying dynamical roles and responsibilities competently, a comprehensive curriculum that provides a discrete learning experience is required.

Graduate Education for HRD Professionals

The human resource development field involves continual changes and needs in today's professional world. Research suggests that there are several key connections that relate to the importance of competent, educated HRD professionals (Dixon, 1990; McLagan, 1989; Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, 2000). So as to develop competencies that are necessary to become a strategic partner within an organization, HRD professionals are turning toward graduate education to help them achieve a higher-level competitive advantage. Horn (1998) notes that 50% of all graduate students, a higher number than ever before, are 30 years and older. Greenberg (2000) contends that HRD graduate students are often seasoned professionals in the field experiencing an increasing need to earn a graduate level degree. Many of these students have reassessed their career goals and recognized that continuing education is needed to advance and to remain competitive. These findings align with correlating research suggesting that 50% of all graduate students, a higher number than ever before, are 30 years and older (Horn, 1998).

The need for business knowledge in the human resource field is identified as a key reason for choosing management and business oriented graduate programs such as MBA and business management programs (Sunoo, 1999). It is interesting to note that the opportunity and added responsibility of becoming a strategic partner in organization development are cited as examples of increased credibility. The need for credible perception is critical if HRD professionals are to be considered key leaders in their roles within organizations. With such weighty expectations in the minds of organizational leaders, it is important to examine how educational programs develop and prepare graduate students for the expectations that lie ahead in HRD careers.

HRD Specific Graduate Programs

While the pursuit of graduate education is becoming a trend among HRD professionals, not all are attending programs that specialize in HRD. For lack of program availability, incompatibility of curriculum with organizational needs, many enroll in programs designed for allied fields such as business, sociology, education, and human services. Employer sponsored tuition assistance programs scrutinize these programs to determine the return on their investment—will the employee/student learn relevant information that can be applied in the workplace?

Nevertheless, numerous graduate programs claiming to specialize in curriculum for the HRD professional are opening in colleges and universities and gaining popularity with learners and organizations across the United States and around the world. When studying the emergence of specialized academic programs, the consistency of primary variables must be observed. This study analyzes similarities and differences of these programs by program descriptions, curriculum, admission requirements, and program mission statements.

Related Research. Hatcher (1998) compared demographic data of graduate level programs, focusing specifically on where HRD programs are housed in colleges and universities offering such degrees. His findings show that the two top contenders for HRD programs are the education department at 32.5% and the business management department at 18%. Other departments that support HRD programs include psychology, liberal arts, and technical and applied sciences. Hatcher also looked at practice-related influence, which gathered actual HRD competencies and business and industry requirements. His findings showed that management teams identified nine essential competencies for HRD staff. The following competencies are identified in order of ranking: adult learning understanding, organization behavior understanding, presentation skill, coaching, project management skill, industry understanding, visioning skill, computer competence, and negotiation skill. Theory-related influence to the programs was also studied to address which areas of emphasis embody the programs in respect to theories of HRD and HRM.

In addition, Kuchinke (2001) studied institutional characteristics, student population, and core curriculum. Fifty-five programs were examined, which included master's, doctoral, and certificate programs. Curriculum categories were assigned and percentages calculated. Kuchinke's finding reflected the five most commonly required courses were in the areas of instructional design, instructional delivery, evaluation, adult learning theories, and needs/performance analysis respectively. Several other subject areas received high rankings as well, with 13 out of 31 in the over 50% category. Again, these findings illustrate the diversity of HRD as a field reflected in educational programs.

Methodology

Target Population and Sample

The target population for this study consists of graduate level programs in human resource development/workforce development, career development, organizational development, or training and development. The sample consists of master's level programs housed within public or private colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to include graduate programs that met guidelines within the scope of this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method that follows specific criteria to collect information (Cooper & Schindler, 1998). The programs included in this study are those in the field of human resource development/ workforce development, career development, organization development, and training and development. Each program included one or more of these subject areas in their degree title. Specifically, judgment sampling, a technique of purposive sampling, is used to select each graduate program based on the specified screening criteria. Judgment sampling is a method of selecting those that conform to the specific criteria that the researcher wishes to obtain.

Data Collection

This study is an examination of extant data. To obtain relevant information, admissions, graduate, and/or department offices were contacted by telephone or electronic mail to request program materials. University and college web-sites were also accessed to obtain like information. A total of 193 programs in human resource related fields were initially examined and considered. Only colleges and universities with human resource/workforce development, career development, organization development, or training and development were chosen for inclusion in this study. Programs were selected based on their degree title and curriculum requirements. These criteria were established to narrow the scope of the study to the field of human resource development, specifically to master's level programs.

Data Sources.

Three primary resources were utilized to collect the necessary data. These resources include Peterson's Guide to Graduate Study 2000, http://www.peterson.com, and http://www.gradschools.com. Peterson's Guide was referenced specifically to human resource development programs that were listed. The two primary web-sites were accessed to obtain information regarding graduate level human resource development, career development, training and development, and organization development programs. By utilizing the program information obtained from

these sources, a thorough investigation of university and college web-sites was conducted. Additional program information was requested from career development offices and graduate program departments, through e-mail and telephone communications. The materials sent from these academic institutions included official course catalogs, curriculum requirements, admission packets, graduate bulletins, and college brochures. All relevant information obtained via direct mailings, electronic mailing, or course information available from college and university web-sites is included in this study.

Data Analysis

Data were collected and entered into spreadsheets and tables for organizational purposes. Program details, curriculum, admission and graduate requirements, student demographics, and mission statements were assessed employing conceptual content analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence (Krippendorf, 1980; Palmquist, Carley, & Dale, 1997). The focus here is on looking at the occurrence of selected terms within a text or texts, Here, key phrases and words in the each of the five areas were tracked and counted. These data were then aggregated and summarized using categorization of each topic. This analysis approach allows for summarization of important points in each of the programs examined (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

Limitations

While established criteria aide in developing consistency in reported data, a good amount of interpretation in content analysis is subjective to the researcher's background, experience, and perspective. One challenging aspect of this study is in the mass amount of information that was recorded and summarized. Limitations include availability of complete information for each examined subject area.

Program Details. The general information for this topic area was relatively accessible from admissions offices or via the Internet. One limitation may be the existence of HRD programs that were not listed in primary resources. Programs that do not list in the accessed primary resources would thus not be included in this study. Another similar limitation may be the omission of programs whose degree titles may fall outside the scope of the established criteria. Some of these programs may be consistent with the curriculum of an HRD program, but may be listed under titles such as adult education, human resource management, industrial relations, etc. While every effort was made to include relevant programs, it was necessary to establish limits in order to define the scope of the study.

Curriculum. When analyzing curriculum, several programs offered specific information about the course description. Other programs did not provide such detail. This lack of detail may have resulted in overgeneralization of a course's main focus. In some cases, programs did not offer complete details regarding course requirements or elective options. In such cases, the remaining courses were recorded into the 'other' category. This situation may have resulted in the omission of information. Finally, all research was based on the most current information available. If coursework requirements have changed and not yet been updated, reported data will only include that which was available to the researcher at the time of the study.

Admission Requirements. One factor encountered in the collection of admission requirements was again the detail of information available. While some educational institutions were very specific about admissions processes, others did not provide such detailed information. For instance, one college may list the application, fee, and personal statement as a requirement. Another may note only the application and fee. The personal statement may be a part of the actual application, but since it was not noted specifically, it would not be recorded. Thus the two programs may require the same materials from the student candidate. However if the programs displayed requirements differently, it would appear as such.

Mission Statements. Limitations to this section include the unavailability of mission statements for each program examined. Some degree programs had mission statements for their individual field, while others had only one mission statement for the entire educational institution. Many of the non-specific mission statements were reviewed, but not recorded or included in this study due to their broad nature.

Findings

Of the 68 programs examined, 35 offer master of science degrees, 12 offer master of arts degrees, and 11 offer master of science in education degrees. The distribution of degree titles is similar to degree types with 34 programs with the degree title of HRD, nine programs titled Organization Development, and eight entitled Training and Development.

The department or school in which HRD and HRD-type programs find residence are distributed in eight areas with the majority residing in Education/Human Services/Workforce Development (29), Graduate and Professional Studies (13), and Management/Business (12).This finding is consistent with a similar study conducted by Hatcher

(1998). The minimum number of required credit hours (CH) for degree completion ranges from as low as 30 CH as high as 51 +CH. Here, 36-38 CH is the most common requirement (30 programs, 44%) and 48+ CH required by only three programs (4.5%). Nineteen programs (19%) require 30-35 CH for degree completion and 22.5% (15 programs) require students to take 39-47 CH.

Curriculum

The curriculum analysis includes data collected from 65 programs. While 68 programs are included in this study, two programs were missing specific curriculum information and were therefore omitted from the curriculum statistics. A third program was omitted based on its similarity to a directly related program within the same university. This university currently offers two degrees for the same degree title. One degree is a Master of Science (MS) and the other a Master of Education (M.Ed.). The curriculum requirements are the same for both programs with the exception of the capstone experience. Here, the MS capstone is a thesis, essay, or paper and the M.Ed. capstone consists of an independent study and a comprehensive study. The categories displayed in Table 1 presents percentages of (a) programs offering one or more courses in the subject area; (b) programs requiring one or more courses; (c) programs offering one or more electives; and (d) programs requiring one or more courses and offering one or more electives. Curriculum requirements encompass a variety of subject areas in this study. Twenty-five of the most frequent topic areas are examined. The eight most commonly offered courses are those in training and development, research methods and statistics, organization development, overview of the HR/HRD field, management and leadership, organization assessment/consulting, program assessment, and adult learning. Each of these course categories is offered by more than 50% of master's level HRD programs.

These results are consistent with many common themes presented by Kuchincke (2001) in related research. Kuchincke notes instructional design, instructional delivery, evaluation, adult learning theories, needs/performance analysis, history and philosophy of HRD, instructional technology, and organization development, as the top eight content areas required in curriculum of graduate HRD programs. Some variations to these findings are noted in this study, perhaps due to the different analysis methods employed. Nonetheless, similar themes present themselves. The range in course curriculum demonstrates a wide breadth of competencies that the graduate level candidate must develop over their course of study. An integration of a soft skill set and a business skill set are demonstrated. It is important to consider the impact of this finding to the field of HRD and to academic program and curriculum developers as well as proponents of accreditation measures.

Breadth of Course Offerings. The range in other course offerings is important to address. Group development and organization behavior are two topic areas that are offered in more that 40% of programs. The offerings show that soft skills are still an essential part of the field of HRD. Diversity and technology are more areas that require attention in the workforce today. With the continuous advances in technology, HRD practitioners must be able to adapt and utilize available technological resources. Diversity is increasingly a focus of training due to many differences in cultural background between employees. Coupled with the integration of several generations of workers, diversity plays a big part in the workplace. Other curriculum options involve human resource management topics such as personnel assessment, labor relations, and compensation. While the roles of HRD professionals do not focus on HRM issues, a general understanding is often important to obtain (Nadler & Wiggs, 1986).

Admission Requirements and Mission Statements

Admission requirements most likely reflect the standards of the institution, standards set forth by associated accrediting bodies as well as the department or school of residence. Admission requirements in the programs examined have a range of levels for entrance. All programs require the application and undergraduate transcript. The majority of programs (>60%) also require letters of recommendation and a testing requirement (GRE, GMAT, etc.). Some departments require more extensive detail into a potential candidate's current skills, experience levels, and professional interaction ability. Others assess the bare essentials of an application and transcript. Most programs do set one or more standard of evaluating a candidate aside from the application and transcript. While the field of HRD is a highly visible one in organizations, it is logical to conclude that personal interaction and ability to communicate effectively are essential components to succeed in HRD programs.

The mission statements reviewed in this study demonstrate an integration of goals for HRD programs. Many of the mission points are connected in some way. It is interesting to note the two most frequently mentioned topics in the statements are providing competencies and promoting career advancement for students. The content of mission statements for HRD programs focus on several key areas. Providing students with competencies to design, implement, and evaluate HRD programs is essential in preparing graduates to accept leadership responsibility within their organizations. Not only will this goal provide career advancement opportunities to graduates, it will enable these professionals to guide organizations through transitions and thus compete in a global marketplace. Providing

these competencies promotes advancement of the field of HRD and serves to promote the high quality of work life for employees. The educational setting also allows practitioners to network with other professionals as they share practical information, resources, ideas, and strategies. The combination of educational and professional experience allows the student to participate in an integrated setting and serves to encourage a supportive learning community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study provides important information for those working with or attending HRD academic programs to observe. Assessing standards and determining best practices provides room for growth, development, and debate. Those founding new programs need benchmarks and examples of how other programs are designed and areas considered in their development. Established academic programs involved in program evaluation and assessment activities can use this information for competitive analyses or to determine curriculum upgrades or changes. The accreditation debate is an ongoing argument that requires considerable study, evidence, and support.

The Accreditation Debate. While program assessment and continuous improvement is important, the area of accreditation is the subject of ongoing debate among professionals and administrators in the field of graduate education. Accreditation programs are sometimes viewed as limiting or too defining in some areas of specialization (Dill, 1998). Other colleges and universities prefer not to 'answer' to such an affiliation, but would rather strive towards their own mission and project the goals of their stakeholders and their communities. Accreditation, however, does hold an attractive lure for many student candidates and organizations. When evaluating programs based on the prestige of accreditation, it is essential to learn about the accrediting body and its standards (Abernathy, 2001). Some institutions develop their own accrediting bodies to impress prospective students. Looking at admission requirements, testimonials from graduates, and instructors' profiles may provide more clues to make an informed decision about a program.

Table 1. *Summary of Curriculum Requirements for Master's Degree HRD Programs: Percentage of Programs Offering Course Category and Offering Status (N=65)*

Curriculum Course Category Offered	Offering Status: Required	Elective	Both	Req. & El.
-Training and development	75%	60%	23%	8%
-Research methods	74%	72%	2%	0%
-Organization development	72%	58%	18%	5%
-Overview of HR/HRD	60%	54%	8%	2%
-Management/leadership	58%	46%	25%	12%
-Organization assessment	58%	42%	20%	2%
-Program assessment	54%	51%	5%	2%
-Adult learning	51%	46%	11%	6%
-Group development	46%	28%	18%	0%
-Organization behavior	43%	35%	15%	8%
-Technology	35%	18%	20%	3%
-Career development	31%	20%	12%	2%
-Diversity/intercultural	26%	11%	15%	0%
-Strategic planning	23%	15%	11%	2%
-Performance/productivity	23%	17%	6%	0%
-Psychology	20%	12%	9%	2%
-Ethics	18%	8%	11%	0%
-Communications	15%	6%	9%	0%
-International relations	14%	3%	11%	0%
-Personnel assessment	12%	5%	8%	0%
-Labor relations	11%	3%	8%	0%
-Self assessment	11%	6%	5%	0%
-Compensation	8%	2%	6%	0%
-Information systems	6%	0%	6%	0%
-Business	3%	2%	2%	0%
-Other	72%	--	--	--
Final Requirements or Capstone Courses				
-Master's project/paper	26%	8%	20%	2%
-Thesis/research	34%	14%	23%	3%
-Seminar 37%	28%	11%	2%	
-Internship/fieldwork	60%	35%	25%	0%

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While HRD programs have advanced over the last few decades, an accrediting body is not currently in place for the field. Since accreditation is an option for some academic programs, it is important to consider the following questions: Would an accrediting body lend greater recognition and acceptance to the HRD field as a whole? Could established curriculum criteria develop professionals conducting 'best practices' nationwide? Do organizations today warrant and demand competent HRD professionals with common bodies of knowledge, skill, and aptitudes? These questions are currently under investigation in the HRD field and link to the further evaluation of educational programs. This study lays a foundation for the exploration of many more areas of relevance in the HRD field. Educational assessment, leadership competencies, and expectations of the professional workplace are topics that require further research. The constantly evolving nature of the business world and the workforce itself prompt practitioners to continually reassess and reevaluate needs. The academic field must do so, as well, to take a proactive role in the education of professional HRD students.

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